
IMPEDIMENTS TO WOMEN IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS

While increasing numbers of women continue to enter the telecommunications industry, there is still a marked lack of women with the technical and managerial expertise—plus length of experience—to start a successful telecommunications business. Second, there appears to be no information networks currently established for women entrepreneurs which can provide advice and support from other women. Third, access to capital is extremely difficult. This is a capital-intensive industry, generally requiring a substantial start-up investment. Sources of capital are limited, partially due to the risk factors involved, and women business owners are less likely to know where to look for capital.

THE EXPERT ROUNDTABLE

The Denver hearing was followed by an expert roundtable discussion on prospects for women business owners in the telecommunications industry in which twenty-nine men and women participated.

In addition to the members of the National Women's Business Council, they represented government, academia, banking, venture capital firms, the media and a variety of large and small telecommunications firms. Several were women business owners.

Discussion centered on two topics: 1) defining tomorrow's telecommunications marketplace, and 2) pre-planning to allow women equal access to this marketplace.

The expert group's recommendations were as follows:

1. Promote the formation of entrepreneurial development funds with tax breaks similar to those of foundations, as well as grant programs and joint ventures in which large companies nurture small and emerging businesses.
2. Generate public policy initiatives encouraging corporate incubation of small businesses for the purposes of training, support and mentoring.
3. Develop networks and associations that bring together women involved in telecommunications for the purpose of exchanging ideas and information about their experiences in telecommunications. Through these networks a program of technical assistance partnerships can be developed.

A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

1993 will be a year of change and a year of growth for women-owned businesses as the economy improves and sources of capital open up for women as well as business in general. Barriers to progress still exist, however, and many of the changes required to remove those barriers have not taken place.

1993 will be the final year of the Council's original five-year mandate. In addition to further development of the Council's studies and programs on the issue of access to capital, and a continuing focus on improved access for women to the government procurement process, the Council will look beyond our borders at opportunities for U.S. women business owners in the global economy.

The goals of the Council's mandate will not all be achieved by the end of 1993. The following activities may not all be completed within that time frame, but are priorities on the Council agenda.

- A hearing on opportunities for women in trade with Latin America and the Pacific Rim, to be held in March, 1993.
- Regional Symposia on Access to Capital under the sponsorship of the Federal Reserve.
- A Women's Economic Summit, tentatively scheduled for September, 1993.
- Efforts to ensure maintenance and expansion of the National Directory of State Programs for Women Business Owners.
- Development of a joint strategic plan with the members of the Interagency Committee on Women's Business Enterprise, which we hope will be reactivated under President Clinton.
- Follow-up on the further studies suggested by the results of the Missouri Pilot Study and focus groups.

EXHIBIT 8

THE 1991 ANNUAL REPORT
TO THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS
of the
NATIONAL WOMEN'S BUSINESS COUNCIL

Little Rock, Arkansas: A Clear Message

On April 30, 1991, the National Women's Business Council held a hearing in Little Rock, Arkansas featuring testimony from women business owners, advocates and corporate representatives.

The same clear thread ran through every witness' testimony: that access to capital has been and continues to be the biggest problem women business owners must face. Whether it is due to actual discrimination against women, the hesitancy of banks to make small loans, or simply the lack of information on available resources and how to tap them, the result is the same. Women's businesses start with less funding, are frequently self-funded, and tend to remain underfinanced even after they have been proven viable.

Several programs designed to give women access to capital and a more equal share of business opportunities were reported. The state of Louisiana, for instance, has a state funded statutorily mandated office for women entrepreneurs, The Division of Minority and Women Business Enterprise, which educates women about the services available to them. Louisiana also offers a procurement participation program with a one per cent set-aside, and a loan program for women offering small business loans at below-market rates.

In Arkansas, Arkansas Power and Light offers leadership training and matching grants programs, and has agreed to help develop a database of woman-owned businesses in the state. For rural low-income women, the Good Faith Fund provides funds for women entrepreneurs who wish to start their own small businesses in order to raise themselves and their families out of poverty.

Suggestions to solve the problem of poor access to capital included:

1. Management training and technical assistance programs to

teach women the skills needed in running a business.

2. More small business incubator programs to encourage and assist start-up businesses.
3. Federal/state cost-sharing programs to boost limited local resources.
4. Information programs to inform women about the resources currently available through federal and state government agencies.
5. More small loan programs designed to assist women.

The stories of actual discrimination against women seeking business loans are heard time and time again despite the legal prohibitions against such bias already in place. Without adequate capital, the woman-owned businesses which represent an increasingly large sector of U.S. small business will not grow, and the entire economy will suffer.

"Women business owners can be the new American dream. Come share those dreams with us and let's prosper together."

*Mary Ann Campbell
Member, NWBC*

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE


I, Denise B. Moline of the Law Firm of Denise B. Moline, P.C., hereby certify that I have caused to be served this 22nd day of July, 1994, by first-class mail, postage prepaid, a copy of the foregoing **Comments of Lowrey Communications, Limited Partnership** on the following:

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